

KENDRICK PARK DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, February 24, 2011 – 7:00 PM
Second Floor Meeting Room/Library, Town Hall
MINUTES

CITIZEN MEMBERS PRESENT: Peg Roberts, Marilyn Rodzwell, Alan Snow, Peter Blier, Hope Crolius, Christina Mata and Susan Sheldon

MEMBERS ABSENT: Liz Rosenberg

STAFF PRESENT: John Musante, Town Manager (Staff Liaison)
Dave Ziomek, Director, Conservation and Development (KPDAC Member)
Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner (KPDAC Member)

OTHERS PRESENT: Michael Alpert of Butterfield Terrace and Ed Wilfert of Gray Street

The meeting began at 7:00 p.m. in the Second Floor Meeting Room/Library, Town Hall.

1. Announcements – none

2. Election of Officers – Peter Blier MOVED to elect Peg Roberts as Chair of the Kendrick Park Design Advisory Committee. Marilyn Rodzwell seconded and the vote was 8-0.

3. Minutes

The Committee reviewed the Minutes of the meeting on November 17, 2010. Ms. Sheldon MOVED to accept the Minutes of November 17, 2010. Ms. Rodzwell seconded and the vote was 8-0.

The Committee reviewed the Minutes of the Site Visit and the indoor Meeting on November 23, 2010. Ms. Roberts noted the following amendments to the Minutes of the indoor meeting November 23, 2010:

Page 3, halfway down the page: “Ms. Roberts reminded the group that the park was going to be at the beginning of the Gateway”, rather than “part of the Gateway”.

Page 4, halfway down the page, add a sentence: “The Committee members expressed concern about the conflict between pedestrian traffic and skateboarders.”

Ms. Sheldon MOVED to accept the Minutes of the indoor meeting of November 23, 2010. Ms. Crolius seconded and the vote was 8-0.

Ms. Crolius MOVED to accept the Minutes of the Site Visit of November 23, 2010. Ms. Sheldon seconded and the vote was 8-0.

4. Program – Review of programmatic elements presented at February 10th Meeting

Committee members asked about the proposed widening of Triangle Street. Mr. Ziomek and Mr. Musante stated that there is no measured plan yet and recommended that the Committee not place the sidewalk too close to the edge on the north side of the park. There may be a need to use some of the park for the widening. They recommended that the Committee wait until Guilford Mooring was present at a meeting to make decisions about this area. Committee members requested that staff investigate this issue with Mr. Mooring and find out more about the proposed widening.

Ms. Crolius expressed concern about using part of the park to widen the road and asked if the park could be compensated for the land that would be taken. It was not clear how this would work, since both the road and the park are owned by the town. Mr. Musante pointed out that the park would cost the town approximately \$1.5 million to construct and that the cost of construction would be a form of compensation. Mr. Ziomek suggested that land on the west side might be added to the park, from the street right-of-way, as compensation.

Ms. Mata expressed surprise that among the informal games and sports included in the Park Program, dated February 4, 2011, prepared by The Cecil Group (page 2, Permanent and Year-Round Activities) there was mention of skateboarding. She noted that kids will skateboard wherever they can and that there is no need to formally accommodate them. The Committee members decided, by consensus, to delete the words “skateboarding” and “rollerblading” from this section. They expressed concern about potential conflicts between pedestrians and skateboarders and roller-bladers. Ms. Mata stated that the Committee could adopt a position such as “don’t prevent, don’t encourage”. Mr. Blier recommended that the designers try to use materials that won’t be disfigured by skateboarding and roller-blading.

The Committee discussed the numbers of users for various spaces (30 for the play area and 200 for the performance space) and agreed that these were appropriate numbers.

Ms. Crolius recommended that on page 5, under Plantings and Vegetation, mention should be made of the “arboretum” concept, that is, choosing plant material and labeling it as it is done in an arboretum. She noted that the subcommittees of the Kendrick Park Committee had discussed this idea during their meetings. Ms. Sheldon noted that the History and Aesthetics and the Landscape and Natural Factors Subcommittees had supported the idea of labeling. It is part of the history of Amherst that plants, such as the Katsura Tree, were brought to Amherst from Japan by Professor Clark in the 19th century.

Ms. Roberts expressed concern that Kendrick Park will not be a good place for annuals, because of the issue of maintenance. She also noted, under Environment and Sustainability, on page 5, that it will be important to prevent flooding, silting and compaction of certain areas of the park. We may need to do something to alleviate the flooding problem in the vicinity of Tan Brook. Ms. Roberts suggested that we and the consultants talk with the Shade Tree Committee about salt tolerant species. She noted that there has been a lot of salt damage this winter as a result of all of the snow that has fallen.

Mr. Ziomek suggested that we talk with Guilford Mooring about how snow should be plowed around Kendrick Park.

On page 6, under Maintenance, Ms. Crolius suggested that we set up a special fund for maintenance of the park – an endowment for maintenance. Mr. Musante stated that part of the long-range vision should be the establishment of the “Friends of Kendrick Park”. A fund has been established for donations, but people are not aware of it yet.

Ms. Roberts suggested that, for now, we should plan for a design that is the least demanding in terms of maintenance.

Ms. Roberts recommended that overhead wires be placed underground. The DPW has estimated that it will cost about \$1 million to put the utilities underground in the vicinity of the park along North Pleasant and East Pleasant. Mr. Ziomek noted that it might be possible to obtain a PWED grant to do some of this work.

Ms. Sheldon MOVED to accept the Park Program as amended. Dr. Blier seconded and the vote was 8-0.

5. Conceptual Plans – Discussion about three conceptual plans presented by The Cecil Group and public comments received on February 10th

Ms. Mata asked about the number of people at the February 10th meeting. There were 20 people who signed in on the registration sheet. There may have been people who attended but did not sign in. Ms. Roberts counted about 28-30 people. The audience members came and went over a period of hours, during the Open House and the public meeting. Ms. Mata stated that she received emails from members of the public.

Ms. Roberts asked that the Committee look at path circulation. Ms. Crolus asked what the Committee's goal is. Ms. Roberts recommended that the Committee make some decisions at this meeting to give The Cecil Group some direction.

Ms. Brestrup distributed a summary of comments showing scores and ratings compiled from the Comment Forms received at the February 10th meeting. The overall ratings were remarkably similar for the three Concept Plans.

Some people commented that they didn't like the play area at the northern end of the site, but wanted it closer to McClellan Street. The Committee focused on the pattern of paths.

Ms. Mata recommended that the Committee, having read the comments from the public, should look at a basic plan and then incorporate input from the public as well as the Committee members' opinions to form a new composite plan.

Most committee members favored Concept Plans B and C, although Ms. Sheldon liked the rounded and biomorphic forms of Plans A and B. Plan C is too blocky, she said. She suggested that the cross paths on Plan C should be softened.

Ms. Mata noted that Jonathan Tucker (in an email) had favored Plan B as the basic plan with aspects of Plans A and C drawn in to Plan B.

Ms. Brestrup noted that Tony Maroulis, of the Chamber of Commerce, had viewed the plans that day with Mr. Tucker. They had jointly decided that Plan C would be a good basic plan, partially based on the paths that cross the site from east to west.

Mr. Tucker had suggested that there be wide paths and strong, wide crosswalks that are raised above the roadway. They liked the southern space in Plan B, but felt that there was too much paving. The southern space should also be well-defined, with a strong edge, not just tree plantings, but shrubs as well.

The Committee discussed the proposal to make North Pleasant Street, west of the park, one-way north bound. Ms. Roberts talked to Chief Nelson and Assistant Chief Stromgren at the 2/10 meeting. They agreed that the northbound direction would be preferable to southbound. The Committee discussed whether there should be two lanes for driving and one lane for parking, as exists now, or two lanes for parking and one lane for driving. Guilford Mooring has stated that there is enough room in the roadway for three lanes (such as 2 parking and 1 driving). This option was preferred.

Ms. Mata stated that Concept B reflects the "spirit" of the work that the Kendrick Park Committee did.

Mr. Musante noted that all three designs are "very green". He stated that the amount and intensity of the tree planting and other planting in all three schemes is more than the existing condition. Plans A and B invite people into the park. He liked the play area closer to McClellan Street. He supported an active southern end that would lend itself to Christmas tree sales and a farmers' market or fair.

Mr. Wilfert asked if the Committee had considered dividing activities into those that have a good place elsewhere in town versus those that don't have a good place elsewhere.

Ms. Roberts stated that Plan B had too many paths.

Ms. Mata stated that Plan A works best for the northern space. The northern entryway of Plan A works well too. Most people like a big open space at the north. Ms. Sheldon agreed that the north end should be more pastoral.

Ms. Rodzwell stated that people should not be able to walk through the play area.

There was discussion about the play area in Plan A. Some liked it because it is set apart and only has one point of entry. Some didn't like it because it is too "tucked away" and may feel scary. There was consensus that a main walkway should not pass through the play area, but a minor pathway might do so. Ms. Mata likes a play area that is "a little tucked away".

Mr. Alpert noted that the play area would be used by children from pre-school to early elementary age. He supported a location near McClellan Street. He suggested that there could be a main path running past the east side or front of the play area and a minor path exiting out the back of it, to provide access from the west. Ms. Roberts agreed that a path from the west into the play area would be good. She agreed that the play area on Plan A was too small and secluded.

Dr. Blier reminded the Committee members about the idea of "natural playgrounds" and stated that the design of the play area can keep it from becoming a cut-through.

Ms. Brestrup described the sequence of design. We are now working on a Conceptual Plan. After we arrive at a preferred design, the consultants will prepare a Schematic Plan, with more detail, perhaps getting more specific about the type of play structures to be installed. We'll then use the Schematic Plan to apply for funding from the state to finish the design ("design development"), prepare construction drawings and build the park. During the design development phase we can get more specific about materials and site furnishings.

Ms. Mata noted that teenage girls enjoy swing sets.

Ms. Roberts suggested that the ice rink should be larger than it is shown on Plan B. Plan A shows a better ice rink. The Committee liked the oval shape of Plan A's ice rink.

The Committee discussed choosing an oval shape for the playground and orienting it in an east-west direction. They liked the shape of the playground from Plan B, but wanted the grass area to be larger.

Mr. Wilfert asked if the playground would become a teenage "hangout" space. Ms. Mata said that this would be acceptable and noted that high school kids need a place to hang out.

Ms. Roberts noted that the different spaces in the park will allow people who might not ordinarily get together to meet in the park.

Ms. Crolus recommended incorporating the performance space from Plan A. Ms. Sheldon did not like the small performance space in Plan B.

Mr. Snow noted that if we stop Tan Brook from flooding in the park it will flood somewhere else.

The Committee discussed Plan C and the idea of moving the play area slightly north, on the west side of the park, where the diagonal granite amphitheatre steps are shown. Some members think that this is the safest place for kids to play. Ms. Crolus suggested moving the

ice rink to the place where it's already wet. She also suggested planting trees in this area that can absorb water. Black Willow and Tupelo were mentioned.

Ms. Sheldon agreed to act as draftsperson and drew suggested changes on yellow trace placed over Plan B and Plan C.

Ms. Roberts noted that the play area will be appealing and should be located near McClellan Street.

Ms. Mata suggested asking The Cecil Group about the flooding issue, particularly related to Plan B.

Mr. Snow suggested that the stream could be a feature, with native plant species planted along the stream bank. It could be an educational area and an interesting plant area. Others disagreed.

General comments:

The Committee liked the softer lines of Plan B, but also liked elements of Plan A and C.

Committee members liked the northern entry area and the northern lawn area and pathway configuration from Plan A. They liked the urban plaza area from Plan B, possibly with more green area and shrubs around the edges.

Plan C

On Plan C, eliminate the diagonal steps; keep the cross path at McClellan Street; curve the cross path to the north so that the lawn/skating rink area is larger; create a lawn/skating area with rounded corners, or make it an oval; move the stage to the south of the lawn/skating area; people can sit on the stage to watch lawn activities and skating.

Ms. Mata expressed concern that we've lost something by taking Plan C as the base and creating a hybrid plan with elements of the other plans. She doesn't want to lose the sense of walking in the park.

Mr. Snow expressed support for Plan A. He likes the flow of the design.

Mr. Musante reminded the Committee members that for most of the year the lawn will provide a passive open green space. For most of the year there will be no skating.

Mr. Wilfert asked about outdoor musical events. He suggested that a place for such events should be acoustically protected.

The Committee members liked the one-way street northbound on the west side of the park. They liked parking against the park (east) side of the street. They agree that the southern portion of North Pleasant Street, as it passes along the park, should be two-way from McClellan south.

Plan B

On Plan B, Ms. Sheldon thought the pergola was too long at the bus stop area. We should use a regular bus shelter, not a pergola, she said.

Mr. Snow stated that the bus stop should be integrated with the rest of the park. The Committee members agreed that the bus stop shelter should be well-designed and protective of people waiting for the bus. It should protect people from wind and rain.

Ms. Sheldon questioned the crushed stone surface in Plan B, at the south end. She said that it may not be ADA accessible and it is not "plowable". There may be other porous materials that would work at the south end.

For Christmas tree sales – we need access for tree sales. Shrubs around the south end, as suggested by Mr. Tucker and Mr. Maroulis, should be intermittent, not continuous.

Ms. Sheldon supported keeping the wall seating along the performance area, but relocating the performance area to a spot farther to the south. Keep the oval shape, but make it larger and tilt it, with a northwest-southeast axis. Ms. Mata likes keeping a walk around the performance space for wheelchairs and strollers.

Ms. Roberts likes the “discovery” aspect of Plan B. Not all spaces are immediately visible. You discover them as you walk along.

Ms. Sheldon suggested incorporating the performance space into the ice rink/lawn area.

The Committee liked the idea of having fewer spaces than shown in Plan B.

The Committee liked having more seating in the park and supported rearranging the seating in the southern urban plaza.

Mr. Alpert stated that there is good internet access in the park all the way up to Bertucci’s.

The Committee would like to see (more?) tables in the park.

Some members wanted to see a water feature in the southern space.

Ms. Mata noted that Sweetser Park has a water feature. Maybe a minimal water feature is appropriate here.

There was discussion about the role and placement of sculpture. There was a suggestion that we could have “visiting” sculptures.

A fountain is problematic. The Committee decided by consensus that there should be no fountain. (It could be “mis-used” by people coming home from bars.)

Mr. Alpert asked about lighting and the possibility of surveillance cameras.

Ms. Mata asked about incidents of vandalism. Ms. Roberts noted that the pocket park behind Rao’s has experienced vandalism.

Mr. Alpert noted that trash will be a problem. There should be trash receptacles – well-designed ones. The downtown area has well-designed trash receptacles. They are expensive but durable.

Ms. Sheldon agreed that the performance space and the skating space should be combined in Plan B.

Flow into and through the park is important.

There should be no kiosk at the northeastern entryway (Plan C). There is no need for this in Kendrick Park.

We should request architectural renderings of the proposed entryways so that people can envision what they would be like.

6. **Recommendations to design consultants in preparation for March 10th meeting** – see above and see photographs of sketch plans
7. **New Business** – none
8. **Future Meetings** – not discussed

9. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Christine M. Brestrup, Senior Planner